

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.

⚠ *Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum).*

PROJECT	
Participant:	VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY (VMU)
PIC number:	882178917
Project name and acronym:	Euroscpticism to Euro-engagement: Rural Dialogues about Europe's Future - Euro-engagement

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	WP5
Event name:	RurEU Views Symposium
Type:	Symposium, Breakout Workshops, Policy Pitch Competition Rural Policy Declaration
In situ/online:	in-situ
Location:	KAUNAS, LITHUANIA
Date(s):	15-18.9.25
Website(s) (if any):	https://zua.vdu.lt/kaune-tarptautinis-dialogas-apie-europos-kaimo-ateiti/
Participants	
Female:	23
Male:	33
Non-binary:	0
From country 1 - Romania [Filiala Asociației Se Poate]:	3
From country 2 - Poland [Idea for Life]:	
From country 3 - Spain [ENREDADOS DE ALICANTE POR LA INNOVACION SOCIAL Y EL DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE]:	2

From country 4 - Bulgaria [ASOTSIATSIJA BIOMREZHA]	2		
From country 5 - Italy [PRO LOCO BROCCOSTELLA ASSOCIAZIONE DI PROMOZIONE SOCIALE]	3		
From country 6 - Lithuania [VYTAUTO DIDZIOJO UNIVERSITETAS]	41		
From country 2 - Poland [FUNDACJA KLASTER INNOWACJI SPOLECZNYCH]	2		
Total number of participants:	56	From total number of countries:	7
Description			
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>			
WP5 – RurEU VIEWS SYMPOSIUM			
Event Overview			
<p>From September 15th to 18th, 2025, the town of Kaunas hosted the WP5 - RurEU Views Symposium as part of the innovative project "Euroscepticism to Euro-engagement." This significant event brought together partners and participants from various backgrounds to engage in meaningful discussions about Europe's future while celebrating its cultural diversity.</p>			
Day 1 – Arrival and Networking			
<p>The first day of the meeting was dedicated to the arrival of participants from partner countries and their accommodation in Kaunas. The evening program included a joint dinner, which served as an informal networking opportunity. The objective of this session was to create a welcoming atmosphere, foster initial connections among the delegations, and set the stage for constructive collaboration in the following days.</p>			
Day 2 – Symposium, Dialogue, and Cultural Experience			
<p>The second day marked the official start of the symposium at Vytautas Magnus University. The central aim of the symposium was to bring together policymakers, researchers, and representatives of rural communities to exchange knowledge and perspectives on the challenges and opportunities facing rural Europe.</p>			
RurEU Views Symposium: Shaping Policies for Vibrant Rural Communities			
<p>The morning program opened with keynote presentations addressing critical issues such as public trust in institutions, regional convergence, community identity, and the effective use of EU resources in rural development. These contributions sought to stimulate discussion on how rural communities can be more actively engaged in European policymaking and benefit from EU initiatives.</p>			
<p>The event opened with a presentation by Dr. Gintarė Vazonienė (Department of Business and Rural Development Management, VMU) entitled "People, Institutions, Rural Areas – Whom to Trust?". She explored questions of public trust and how relationships between institutions and communities influence the development of rural regions.</p>			
<p>Next, Dr. Mantas Švažas (Department of Applied Economics, Finance and Accounting, VMU) delivered a presentation "Convergence of Regions – Key Approaches and Challenges". He examined how the economic and social development of different regions can be brought closer together and what barriers must be overcome to achieve cohesion.</p>			
<p>Dr. Ingrida Kazlauskienė (Department of Business and Rural Development Management, VMU) presented the journey of the Lapių community towards strengthening its identity in the talk "Towards a Sustainable Identity: The Journey of the Lapių Community". She emphasized that community identity is important not only for culture but also for social and economic development.</p>			

Lukas Alsys, Deputy Mayor of Kaunas District Municipality, spoke about practical experiences of local governance in his presentation “Building Vibrant Rural Futures: Kaunas District Experience in Leveraging EU Resources”. He shared concrete examples of how EU funds are used to create added value in rural areas.

This was followed by a panel discussion, “**Rural Voices, EU Choices**”, moderated by Dr. Asta Raupelienė, which provided a platform for dialogue on specific themes including agriculture, infrastructure, education, and social services. The goal was to collect diverse viewpoints and identify potential policy directions that reflect the needs of rural communities.

The symposium became a platform for open dialogue about the kind of Europe desired in rural areas: one with stronger communities, stronger institutions, or a balanced combination of both.

In the afternoon, participants took part in the activity “**Exploring Europe Through Science**”, which involved visits to university laboratories. The objective was to introduce participants to innovative research practices, highlight the role of science and education in fostering European integration, and demonstrate the practical application of modern technologies for rural development.

The day concluded with a cultural program, “Taste of Lithuania”, featuring traditional šakotis baking and a shared dinner. This activity aimed to strengthen intercultural understanding, showcase Lithuanian heritage, and provide space for informal exchange between participants in a relaxed, community-oriented setting.

Day 3 – Workshops, Policy Innovation, and Cultural Heritage

The third day of the program focused on collaborative work and the development of concrete policy outcomes.

The morning began with “**RurEU Action Labs**”, interactive breakout workshops where participants worked in smaller groups to brainstorm rural policy solutions. The objective was to generate innovative, bottom-up recommendations tailored to the challenges of rural communities, with an emphasis on youth engagement, sustainability, mobility, and digital inclusion.

Following this, the “**Pitch for Progress**” competition provided a platform for rural community representatives and students to present their policy ideas directly to experts and peers. The goal of this session was to encourage creativity, empower local voices, and promote youth involvement in shaping Europe’s rural future.

The collaborative work culminated in the adoption of the **Rural Policy Declaration**, a joint document summarizing the key insights, recommendations, and shared commitments developed during the symposium. The declaration represented both the intellectual and practical achievements of the meeting, serving as a roadmap for stronger integration of rural perspectives into EU policymaking.

In the afternoon, participants continued their cultural discovery with a visit to Raudondvaris Manor. This cultural journey highlighted the importance of heritage in rural identity and tourism, offering a direct link between cultural traditions and future development strategies.

The day concluded with a communal dinner, providing additional space for informal networking and reflection on the day’s outcomes.

Day 4 – Closing and Departure

The final day was dedicated to the departure of participants. After breakfast and informal conversations, delegations checked out and departed from Kaunas.

The primary objective of the final day was to ensure smooth logistics and provide closure to the meeting, leaving participants with strengthened networks, shared experiences, and a clear commitment to continuing cooperation on rural policy development across Europe.

CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

The WP5 - The RurEU Views Symposium in Kaunas successfully fulfilled its objective of bridging rural communities with EU institutions through dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaborative policymaking.

One of the central results of the symposium was the adoption of the **Rural Policy Declaration** – a joint document that brings together the key insights, policy

recommendations, and shared commitments developed throughout the discussions. The workshops and pitch competition played an important role in empowering participants, particularly young people and rural community representatives, to present innovative ideas and actively contribute to shaping European rural policy. In addition, the laboratory visits and cultural activities provided valuable opportunities to deepen participants' understanding of how science, education, and cultural heritage support both European integration and the vitality of rural areas. Finally, the event created strong networking opportunities, strengthening transnational cooperation among project partners and participants and laying the foundation for continued collaboration in the future.

Participants emphasized the value of the symposium's balance between academic discussions, practical workshops, and cultural experiences, noting that this combination created a dynamic and engaging environment. The format encouraged active participation rather than passive listening, which fostered a strong sense of ownership of the final declaration and its recommendations. Looking ahead, participants suggested that future initiatives could benefit from more cross-border exchange formats and structured follow-up mechanisms to monitor the implementation of policy proposals.

Overall, the symposium was not only a platform for dialogue but also a significant milestone in shaping a more inclusive, resilient, and vibrant vision of Europe's rural future.

Outputs of the meeting:

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1X1VRfoa_U_RXoyf0drCHETYsqqBxhc2r

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	18.09.2025	Initial version (new MFF).